

# Meet Our Spring 2025 Cohort

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## Sophie Arkusinski

Sophie is a third-year student at Columbia Law School. After receiving her B.S. in applied mathematics and B.A. in human rights from Southern Methodist University, she joined AmeriCorps as a volunteer coordinator for organizations supporting education equity. During law school, Sophie has focused on education and tax law and spent a summer as a legal intern for Leadership for Educational Equity.



## Danielle Basdekis

Danielle is a second-year student at the University of Maryland Carey School of Law. She holds a B.S. in political science with a double major in gender studies from Florida State University. During her undergraduate studies, she served as a teaching assistant and academic tutor. Danielle is passionate about civil rights and LGBTQ+ work, having served as a legal intern this past summer for FreeState Justice, a nonprofit that serves low income LGBTQ+ Marylanders. Throughout her public interest experiences, she has garnered an interest in education law and strengthening educational systems.



## Yalinel Beltre

Yalinel is getting her M.A. in education policy at Teachers College, Columbia University, concentrating on K-12 education. She earned a B.A. in sociology with a minor in intergroup relations from Skidmore College. Yalinel worked for two years at YouthBuild NYC Collaborative, supporting education and workforce development programs for out-of-school and out-of-work young people. She served as an English teaching assistant in Spain and currently works as a Spanish TA and Administrative Fellow at Columbia University. Yalinel aspires to develop policies that ensure historically marginalized students, particularly in urban areas, receive equitable and culturally responsive educational opportunities.

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## Rebecca Bitar

Rebecca is a third-year student at the University of Michigan Law School. After receiving her B.S. from the University of Maryland, she worked at the J.P. Morgan Private Bank in New York for two years. During law school, Rebecca practiced as a student attorney in the Child Advocacy Law Clinic, representing both parents and minors in child welfare cases. Her experience in the clinic has made her passionate about child law and how education systems can improve children's outcomes.



## Fabian Bramwell

Fabian is a third-year student at Columbia Law School. After receiving his B.S. from the University at Albany, he joined Teach For America and taught middle school science, high school biology, and other subjects. Fabian is interested in how education will function with the integration of emerging technologies within society.

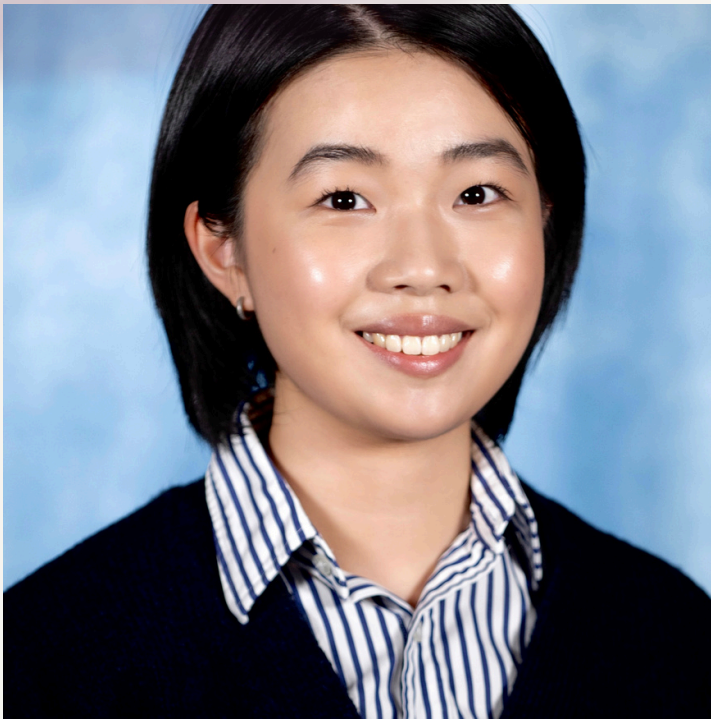


## James Brown

James is a second-year student at the University of Michigan Law School. He is from Manchester in the United Kingdom, and received an LLB at the University of Huddersfield. In the UK, James worked as a paralegal in a human rights law firm and volunteered in a refugee charity on the advocacy team Care4Calais. He also founded the road safety youth council, Vision Zero Youth Council Manchester, and was involved in lobbying for transport and climate related policy changes in Manchester. He has worked as a student-attorney at the Michigan Innocence Clinic, helping to exonerate wrongfully convicted Michiganders. He hopes to focus his career at the intersection of law and policy, particularly on social, economic, and cultural human rights.

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## Sandy Chen

Sandy Chen is pursuing an M.A. in international and comparative education at Teachers College, Columbia University. She holds a Bachelor of Management in business administration in Guangzhou, China. Sandy has diverse professional experience, including supporting workers' rights with global brands, evaluating education programs for migrant students, and coordinating cross-border initiatives in international education. She aims to advance equitable education reform globally, focusing on vocational education and intercultural transitions.



## Seimi Chu

Seimi is a second-year student at Duke University School of Law. She earned her B.A. and M.A. from Stanford University, where she served as president of the Korean Student Association and the Stanford Pre-Law Society. At Duke, she serves as the Director of Duke Lawyer on the Line, leading and assisting with pro bono cases by counseling clients of Legal Aid of North Carolina.



## Carter Cooper

Carter is Pursuing a Master of Public Administration at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. She holds a B.A. in psychology and law & society from Oberlin College where she was a John F. Oberlin Scholar. Before graduate school, Carter worked in higher education administration, focusing on student development and community engagement. Carter hopes to combine her prior studies in psychology and legal equity with her passion for policy advocacy to create impactful, equity-driven solutions to systemic challenges.

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## Mckenna Grossheim

Mckenna is pursuing a Master's of Education in sociology and education from Teachers College, Columbia University. After finishing her undergraduate degree in psychology, she worked with California 100 on a visionary effort to brainstorm solutions for institutional issues affecting the state. Her professional aspirations have been fueled by this experience -- she now aims to implement school-based mental-health programs and curriculum into K-12 education to improve student's well-being and academic performance.



## Devika Gurung

Devika is a third-year student at CUNY School of Law. After receiving her B.A. from Bowdoin College, she served with City Year New York. Devika then received her Master of Arts in Teaching while teaching elementary school at the Harlem Children Zone's Promise Academy. During law school, she has focused on civil rights and education law with internships at Advocates for Children of New York, the U.S. Department of Education, and the New York Civil Liberties Union. Devika is passionate about advocating for equitable access to quality education.



## Erin Hanley

Erin is a second-year Master of Public Administration student at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University studying education policy and media. She graduated from Smith College in 2019 with a B.A. in government and American studies, then worked as a paralegal at an employment law firm for two years. Prior to SIPA, Erin completed a Fulbright fellowship in Thailand and substitute taught in the Bay Area. Born and raised in San Francisco, Erin is passionate about bettering the city they love and view education as an upstream solution to many of the city's current social problems.

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## Minji Kim

Minji is a second-year student at USC Gould School of Law. She graduated from UCLA with a B.A. in psychology and a minor in history. At UCLA, she administered educational assessments to elementary school children as a research assistant in a developmental educational psychology lab. During law school, she has been involved in Street Law and has worked at a special-education nonprofit. Minji is passionate about equal access to education for all students.



## Brennan Lamers

Brennan is a second-year law student at Columbia Law School. He earned his undergraduate degree from Arizona State University, where he served as a residential engagement leader and community assistant, supporting first-year students as they transitioned into a new academic environment. Brennan has also helped lead and facilitate several academic programs, including AI4ALL and SummerUp Camp, mentoring middle school and high school students to help them achieve their academic and personal goals. He is passionate about strengthening educational systems to better serve students and foster their success.



## Riley McCoy

Riley is a second-year student at UCLA School of Law. She graduated from the Loyola Marymount University's honors program with a double major in political science and economics where she completed a thesis on the theoretical conceptions of punishment in education. Prior to law school, Riley worked as an economic research associate at a policy organization in the Bay Area, mapping the region's recovery from COVID-19. She will miss the sunshine, but she is looking forward to spending the spring participating in CPRL and exploring New York City.

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## Ezra Morton

Ezra is pursuing her M.A. in education policy at Teachers College, Columbia University. She holds a B.S. in biomedical engineering from New Jersey Institute of Technology and a Ph.D. in microbiology from Howard University. Prior to pursuing her degree in education policy, Ezra worked as science teacher, math teacher, and an academic interventionist in K-12 public schools in both New York and New Jersey. Her specialization is K-12 policy and she is passionate about increasing teacher retention in public schools.



## Alex Roman

Alexander is pursuing his Master's in Education Policy at Teachers College, Columbia University. He holds a B.S. in Education Studies, a B.S. in Political Science, and a minor in Chicano/a and Latino/a Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Over the last few years, Alex has worked as a community outreach coordinator, assistant preschool teacher, and a University Senator at Teachers College; through all his capacities, he has dedicated himself to enriching the educational experience of students at every level of education.



## Sarah Smith

Sarah is a second-year law student at City University of New York Law School, where she has twice been elected student government president. Sarah earned her BSW, MSW, and NYS Social Work License, specializing in community, policy, and political science at Stony Brook University while working full-time. She guided veterans, individuals, and families through financial, mental health, and housing challenges. Then, working in a legislative office, she helped draft legislation and has interned with NYS HCR and NYS OAG, sharpening her legal research, policy analysis, and due diligence skills.

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## Shawn Soucie

Shawn is currently pursuing a Master's degree in quantitative methods in the social sciences at Columbia University. He earned a B.A. in global studies and a B.S. in finance from Providence College. Prior to graduate school, he spent two years working at Bain Capital in Boston. Originally from a small town in central Massachusetts, Shawn has a strong passion for public education systems. Drawing on his interdisciplinary background, he is committed to helping design and implement solutions that respond directly to the complex challenges public education systems face in a rapidly evolving, technology-driven world.



## Bo Sun

Bo is a second-year student at Columbia Law School. While pursuing his B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, he operated his charity foundation, Bo's Love Charity Foundation, which raised over \$100,000 to support Tanzanian orphanages with education, food, and infrastructure projects. During law school, Bo has focused on corporate and nonprofit law.



## Anna Theil

Anna is a second year law student at New York University School of Law. She holds a B.A. from Scripps College in philosophy and history. During her undergraduate studies, she interned at an ed tech startup where she learned about the changing landscape of post-pandemic K-12 schooling. In law school, Anna is interested in intellectual property law and ensuring that educational resources remain accessible to as broad a community as possible.